

On The Occasion Of Hitting A Home Run

With Bases Loaded

He can't do it, icecream tongues clacked,
he hasn't the wrists. I heard
and immediately thought of heroes.

There are moments in the smallest sun
which seem enough. There are events
whose substance we may magnify
beyond schoolyards or history of kings.

Europe was creeping up behind our games.
If we paused to contemplate our bodies,
the secret code of coaches, the eager girls
with waiting breasts, spectators swimming
in our summer gaze,
we wanted to be reckless as any Greek poem
or approaching draft boards.

I believed myself invincible (then)
against curves, sliders, changeups
and screwballs pitched by life.
(My father, athletic director of ancestry,
told me on what side I belonged, although
such teams were invisible on that field.)

I swung late —
the fat bat crashing the ball,
my fists vibrating revolutionary songs,
my body a pent up barricade.
And the object became a white pigeon
spinning strong toward right field fences,
arcing into green escape.

Then I was sprayed with loud flowers of joy.
All popcorn and cola voices hurraed their flags
for that afternoon's minimal victory.

But I argue it was a last season for such things,
a stolen hour to be American and young.

— Leslie Woolf Hedley